

THE DETERMINATION OF CHRIST TO SUFFER FOR HIS PEOPLE NO. 2443

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 15, 1895
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK

“And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.”
Mark 15:23

OUR Savior, before He was nailed to the cross, and on the cross, several times had drinks of different sorts offered to Him. Whilst they were nailing Him to the cross, they endeavored to make Him drink wine, or vinegar as it is called, mingled with gall. But when He had tasted of it—He did taste it—He would not drink it. When He was on the cross, the soldiers, mocking Him, offered Him vinegar, or their weak drink of which they ordinarily partook, pledging Him in their cups with scorn. And once more, when He said, “I thirst,” they took a sponge filled with vinegar, dipped it in hyssop, and put it to His lips.

This occasion of offering the wine mingled with myrrh is, I believe, different from all the rest. This wine mingled with myrrh was given to Him as an act of mercy. Matthew Henry seems to think that it was prepared by those holy women who were wont to attend to the necessities of our Lord. They had followed Him in all His footsteps whithersoever He went. It was by their bounty that the bag which Judas kept was generally as full as it was required to be, so that out of the store they could go and buy food for their Master and for His disciples.

It was these holy women who prepared the spices to embalm Him at His burial. And Matthew Henry thinks that these women, prompted by their compassion for Him, prepared this cup of wine mingled with myrrh, that He might be strengthened for His miseries, and that those miseries might, in some degree be alleviated by the partial stupefaction which a strong draught of wine and myrrh would give to Him.

This time our Savior positively declined the cup, “He received it not.” The wormwood He tasted, but this he received not at all. He would have nothing to do with it. Why? The answer is not to be found in our Savior’s abstemiousness, for He was not abstemious—He was never self-indulgent, but He certainly was never abstemious.

He was “the Son of Man” who “came eating and drinking.” He felt no repugnance to wine—He Himself made it, He Himself drank it. He even earned for Himself the name, “a gluttonous man and a winebibber”—not deservedly, but because, in contrast to John, who abstemiously refrained from ordinary food, Jesus Christ sat down with publicans and sinners, feasted with the feasters, and ate and drank like other men.

Nor do I think the reason is to be found in any love of pain that Christ had, nor in any heartless bravado, which would lead Him to say, “I will suffer and I will put the cup away from Me.” Far be that from Christ. He never thrust Himself in the way of suffering when it was unnecessary. He did not go to give Himself up into the hands of His enemies before His hour was come. He avoided persecution when the avoidance of the persecution would not be an injury to His cause. He withdrew out of Judea and would not walk in that land because of Herod, who sought to slay Him.

I believe that if our Savior had not been the atoning sacrifice—if His sufferings had been merely those of a martyr—He would have quaffed to the very dregs the cup that was offered Him and would not have left any of it. The reason why he refused the cup, I think, is to be found in another thing altogether.

There is a glorious idea couched in the fact that the Savior put the myrrhed wine-cup entirely away from His lips. On the heights of heaven the Son of God stood of old, and He looked down and measured how far it was to the utmost depths of misery. He cast up the sum total of all the agonies which a man must endure to descend to the utmost depths of pain and misery. He determined that to be a faithful High Priest and also, to be a *suffering* one, He would go the whole way, from the highest to the lowest, “from the highest throne in glory to the cross of deepest woe.”

This myrrhed cup would have stopped Him within a little of the utmost limit of misery. Therefore, He said, “I will not stop half-way, but I will go all the way. And if this cup can mitigate My sorrow, that is just the reason why I will not drink it, for I have determined that to the utmost lengths of misery I will go, that I will do, and bear, and suffer all that Incarnate God can bear for My people, in My own mortal body.”

Now, beloved, it is this fact that I wish to bring out before you—the fact that Jesus Christ came into the world to suffer—and that because the myrrhed cup would have prevented Him from reaching the lowest step of misery, “he received it not.”

I shall have to show you, first, that this was very frequently the case throughout His life—that He would not take a step which would have diminished His miseries, because *He was determined to go the whole length of suffering*. Secondly, I shall try to show you *the reason for this determination*. Then, thirdly, I shall close up by speaking of *the lesson that we may learn from it*.

I. OUR SAVIOR WOULD GO THE WHOLE LENGTH OF MISERY—He would suffer in every respect like as we suffer.

He would bear the whole of the tortures of atonement, without even the slightest shadow of mitigation or alleviation. Now, I think I can show you that, on many occasions in Christ’s life, He determined to be tempted in every point in which men are tempted and to be tempted to the utmost limit of the power of temptation. Nor would He accept anything which would have limited the force of the temptation upon man. I will give you some proofs of this.

First, *Christ knew that you and I would be exposed to peril*. He, therefore, determined that He would be exposed to peril, too, and that He would not by any means, when it was in His power, escape from the peril. Let me show Him to you high up there, on the pinnacle of the temple. There stands our Master and a fiend by His side, on a giddy eminence, with but little beneath His feet.

He stands poised aloft, He looks down the hill on which the temple is built, into the depths below—and the enemy says, “Cast Yourself down, commit Yourself to the care of the angels.” It was like this myrrhed cup, “Do not stand in this peril, cast Yourself upon that promise and risk Yourself upon the angels’ wings, for they shall bear You up in their hands, lest You dash Your foot against a stone.” But like as He would not receive this cup, so neither would he receive this deliverance from His peril. But there He stood erect, confident in His God, not using the means of deliverance which the tempter wished Him to exercise, even as He would not drink this cup.

Take another case—*Jesus Christ knew that many of His people would have to suffer bodily wants, and poverty, and woe*. He therefore hungered. After forty days’ fast, when He might have delivered Himself from His hunger by turning stones into bread, one would have said, “It would have been a very innocent act to turn stones into bread and feed Himself.”

But “No,” says Christ to the gnawing pangs of hunger, “I will let you go as far as you can. I will not turn these stones into bread. I will let hunger exercise all its power upon Me. I will let My body be gnawed by its fierce teeth. I will not mitigate its misery.” He would not receive that wine mingled with myrrh that the devil offered Him in the wilderness, when he tempted Him to make the stones into bread—He would not take the mitigation of His misery.

I will tell you another case. Many men have attempted to have their lives cut short because they have so much misery, and no more hope of being happy, therefore they have wished for death. They have wished that they might be as the untimely birth, that they might be forever shut up in the bowels of the earth forever.

They have longed for death and desired it—and if an opportunity had cast itself in their way in which they might have died with honor, without having even the disgrace of suicide—how many would have accepted the alternative of death!

Here is our Savior in the same condition, for He is dragged to the brow of the hill of Nazareth. O Son of man, Your wisest choice is to be dashed down the sides of the hill on which the city is built! If You are wise, You will let them hurl You headlong—that would be an end of all Your misery, for there are years before You through which You will be roasted at the slow fire of persecution, and afterwards You will have to pass through floods of deepest misery.

Do you not think the temptation started up in His mind, “Let Yourself be cast down”? He knew all about it. Had He been cast down, He would have died an honorable death, like the death of a prophet slain in his own country—but no, “passing through the midst of them, he went his way,” because as he refused the wine-cup, so he refused a hasty death which would have delivered Him from His miseries.

Do you not observe that I have only just given you specimens? You will find that *all through the Savior's life it was just the same*. You will not find Him in one instance working a miracle to lessen His own bodily fatigue, or to alleviate His own bodily needs and necessities, but always letting the ills of this life wreak themselves upon Him with all their fury.

He hushed the winds, once, but it was for His disciples, not for Himself. He lay in the ship asleep, and let the waves toss Him up and down as much as they pleased. He multiplied the loaves and fishes, but it was for the multitude, not for Himself. He could find money in a fish's mouth, but it was to pay the tribute, not for Himself.

He could scatter mercies wherever He went—open men's eyes, and deliver many of them from pain. He never exercised any of His skill upon Himself. If the wind blew, He let it spend itself upon His cheeks and crack them. If the cold was bitter, He let the cold come round Him, as it did in the garden of Gethsemane. If journeying was troublesome, He journeyed where He might have traveled as His Father did—as old Thomas Sternhold says in his fine translation of the Psalms—

*“The Lord descended from above,
And bow'd the heavens most high,
And underneath His feet He cast
The darkness of the sky.*

*“On cherub and on cherubim
Full royally He rode,
And on the wings of mighty winds
Came flying all abroad.”*

So might Jesus, if He pleased, but He journeyed on in weariness. He might have made the water leap out of the well to His hand, but there He sat and thirsted, while He had power to make fountains gush even from the stone on which He sat. On the cross, “I thirst,” was His cry, and yet, if He pleased, He might have opened in Himself rivers of living water—He had them for others, but He had none for Himself.

You will observe this fact that, in all the history of Christ, never once did He take anything which could have lessened His miseries—but He went the whole length—and as on this occasion he refused the wine drugged with myrrh, and so never did he receive anything that had a tendency to prevent Him from going to the requisite lengths of suffering.

II. Now let me show you THE REASON FOR THIS.

Was it out of any love to suffering that He thus refused the wine-cup? Ah, no, Christ had no love of suffering. He had a love of souls, but like us He turned away from suffering, He never loved it. We see He did not, for even in the garden He said, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” It was His human nature struggling against suffering, as human nature rightfully does.

God has made us so that we do not naturally love suffering—and it is not wrong for us to feel some repugnance to it, for God has implanted that repugnance in us. Christ did not suffer because He loved suffering. Why, then, did He suffer? For two reasons—because this suffering to the utmost was necessary to the completion of the atonement, which saves to the utmost, and because this suffering to the utmost was necessary to perfect His character as “a merciful High Priest” who has to compassionate souls that have gone to the utmost of miseries themselves—that He might know how to succor them that are tempted.

First, I say it *was necessary to make the atonement complete*. I think that if our Savior had drunk this myrrhed cup, the atonement would not have been valid. It strikes me that, if He had drunk this wine mingled with myrrh, He could not have suffered to the extent that was absolutely necessary. We believe Christ did, on the cross, suffer just enough, and not one particle more than was necessary for the redemption of His people.

If, then, this wine-cup had taken away a part of His sufferings, the ransom price would not have been fully complete—it would not have been fully paid. And if it had but taken away so much as a grain, the atonement would not have been sufficiently satisfactory. If a man’s ransom is to be paid, it must be all paid, for though but one single farthing is left unpaid, the man is not fully redeemed and he is not yet totally free.

If, then, this drinking of the wine-cup had taken out the smallest amount from that fearful price of agony which our Savior paid, the atonement would have been insufficient—insufficient only to a degree, but even insufficiency to a degree, however small, would have been enough to have caused perpetual despair, yes, enough to have shut the gates of heaven against all believers.

The utmost farthing must be paid. Inexorable justice never did yet omit so much as a fraction of its claim. Nor would it in this case have exonerated in any measure—Christ must pay it all. The wine-cup would have prevented His doing that, therefore He would suffer and go the whole length of suffering. He would not stop, but would go through it all.

Again, I say it was *that He might be made a compassionate High Priest*. Someone might have said, “When my Master died, He did not suffer much. He suffered somewhat, but the wine-cup prevented much suffering. I dare not touch the wine-cup—at least, I dare not take it so as to alleviate my sufferings at all—then I must suffer more than He, for that drugged wine I must not drink. Surely, then, my Master cannot sympathize with me, if I for conscientious motives bear suffering without accepting alleviations which some think are wrong.”

“Nay,” said the Master, “nay, you shall never say that. If you have to suffer without a comfort, I will let you know that I suffered without a comfort, too.” You say, “Oh, if I had some myrrh given me which could mitigate my woe, it would all be well!” “Ah!” says the Savior, “but I have had it offered to Me and I will not drink it in order that you may see that I suffered woe without the comfort, without the cordial, without the consolation which you think would enable you to endure it.”

O blessed Lord Jesus, You were “tempted in all points like as we are”! Blessed be Your name! This myrrh-cup could have put a plate of steel upon Your breast, it would have blunted many darts of suffering. Therefore You put it aside that You might, naked, suffer every shaft to find its target in Your heart. This myrrh-cup would have steeled Your feelings, so that You could not be torn by the whips of anguish. Therefore You would not take its steeling influences, its hardening qualities. You, who did stoop to become a poor, weak worm, “a worm and no man,” did bear the agony, without making the agony less, or strengthening Your own body to bear it. O blessed High Priest!

Go to Him, you tried and tempted ones. Go to Him and cast your burdens on Him—He can bear them, He has borne burdens heavier than yours. Cast your burden on the Lord, as His shoulders can sustain it. And His shoulders, that have borne trouble without comfort, can bear your troubles, though they are comfortless ones, too. Do but tell them to your Master and you shall never find a lack of sympathy in Him.

III. And now, what have we to say by way of A LESSON for this short discourse?

When Christ was offered this cup, He would not receive it. Sometimes, beloved, it is in your power to escape from sufferings for Christ's sake—and you may rightly do so if you can escape from them without injuring the mission upon which your Father has sent you—for as He sent His Son into the world, even so has He sent you into the world.

You have your mission and there are times when the acceptance of a cordial, or the reception of an escape from peril, would be a degradation to your high dignity, an injury to your office, and therefore there are times when you should decline even the cup of consolation itself.

You and I are called to hold fellowship with Christ in His sufferings. Perhaps our business places us where we have to hold fellowship with Christ in the suffering of contempt. The finger is pointed at us. The lips are sometimes protruded in derision. Sometimes an expression is used towards us, calling us a hypocrite, a cant, a formalist.

You may be apt to think, "Oh, that I could avoid all this! I wish I could escape." Can you avoid it and serve your Master, as well? If you can, then drink the myrrh-cup and avoid the misery. But if you cannot—and if it is proven that your position is one of duty, and one in which you can honor your Master—it is at your peril that you exchange your situation for an easier one, if you exchange it for one less useful.

"Oh!" says one, "I work among wicked men and I have to bear a testimony for truth in their midst. May I not leave the place at once? I feel that I am doing good there, but the jeers and taunts are so hard to bear, that the good I do seems to be always counterbalanced by the misery I suffer." Take care, take care, lest you let the flesh prevail over the spirit.

It would be like a myrrh-cup to you, for you to leave your job and go to another. It would be the removal of your pain, but ponder a long time before you do it, weigh it well. If your Maker has put you there, to suffer for His name's sake, come not down from the cross to which He has nailed you by a daily crucifixion, till you have suffered all. And take not the myrrh-cup of an escape until you have borne all for Christ.

I think it was holy Polycarp who, when the soldiers came to him to take him to prison, made his escape. But when he found, afterwards, that his doing so had dispirited some Christians and had been attributed to his cowardice—when next the soldiers presented themselves and he had an opportunity to escape, "No," he said, "let me die."

It had been foolhardy of him if he had run into the teeth of men the first time, in order to be put to death. But when he saw that he would serve His Master better by His death than by His life, it would have been an unrighteous thing if He had drunk of the wine-cup—if he had made his escape and not died for his Master's sake.

O my brethren, I do think that there are many cordials which the world, too, has to offer to the Christian which he must not drink at all, because if his Master wishes him to have fellowship with Him in His suffering, it is his to suffer so far as his Master wills.

You are, perhaps, a man or a woman of a sorrowful spirit. You are given to solitude and loneliness. There are certain amusements which some men say are harmless—they tell you that they are meant for you and ask you to go and take them. You think, "Well, in my low state, surely I might take these things. If I were happy and joyous, I should not need them, but surely my Father, 'like as a father pitieth his children,' will pity me. And if I do these things, I do them merely for temporary comfort, for my heart seems as though it would break if I had not this little temporary excitement."

Take care, take care, that it is not the wine-cup that prevents you, my friends. If your Master gives you the wine-cup, the golden wine-cup filled with the precious wine of the covenant, the strong promises, and sweet fellowship in Christ, drink it without a moment's hesitation. Drink it and be glad, for God has said, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish," and this is the strong drink He gives to you in the golden wine-cup of the Savior's fellowship. Drink it and be happy.

But if men offer it to you, look many a time before you drink it. It may be, you may be right in drinking it—it may not be a wrong thing—but it may be, too, that even a thing that is innocent to others,

may be wrong to you. And the taking of that amusement and pleasure into your hand, might be like our Savior's taking the myrrh-cup and drinking it. It would be a stultifying of you, a preventing you from learning all the lessons of your misery, from going in all the steps of your Redeemer, who wishes us to follow Him through all the miseries which He has ordained for us, that they may be the means of fellowship with Him in His suffering.

This is the only lesson I desire to give you at this time. If the Lord impresses it on our minds, it may be of use to us. Only let me say, how many there are who would have drunk this wine-cup, if it had been offered to them! Your Savior has taken from you the desire of your eyes with a stroke. He has robbed you of one who is dear and near to you.

Say, Christian, if you had had the myrrh-cup put before you, if it had been said, "If you like, that loved one of yours shall live." If it had been offered to you that the life that has been taken away should be spared—could you with fortitude have said, "Not my will, but thine, be done"? Could you have put it away and said, "No, my Master, if this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, Your will be done. And what is more, if it may pass from me, if I need not the suffering, yet if I can honor You more by suffering, and if the loss of my beloved one will serve You and please You, then so let it be. I refuse the comfort when it comes in the way of Your honor. I reject the favored mercy if it comes in the teeth of Your glory. I am willing to suffer—Your consolations I care not for, if I can honor You better without them, I will do without them?"

There are some among you in the habiliments of mourning. Let me just, in conclusion, note a very beautiful thought of a good man on a passage of Scripture. Jesus says in His prayer, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." Do you know why good men die? Do you know why the righteous die? Shall I tell you what it is that kills them?

It is Christ's prayer, "Father, I will that they be with me." It is that that fetches them up to heaven. They would stay here if Christ did not pray them to death. Every time a believer mounts from this earth to heaven, it is caused by Christ's prayer. "Now," says this good old divine, "many times Christ and His people pull against one another in prayer. You bend your knee in prayer and say, 'Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am.' Christ bends His knee and says, 'Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am.'"

So, you see, one gets hold of him, and the other, too. He cannot be in both places. The beloved one cannot be with Christ and with you, too. Now, what shall be the answer? Put the prayers side by side. You are praying, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." And there is your Savior, praying that they may be with Him where He is.

Now, if you had your choice—if the King should step from His throne and say, "Here are two supplicants. They are praying opposite to one another—their prayers are clearly contrary to each other—I cannot answer them both." Oh, I am sure, though it were agony, you would start from your feet, and say, "Jesus, not my will, but thine be done." You would give up your prayer for your sick husband's life, for your sick wife's life, for your dying child's life, if you could realize the thought that Christ was praying in the opposite direction, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am."

And now we come to the supper of our Master. Oh, may the Master give us fellowship with Him! Poor sinners that know not Christ, I have hardly a moment in which to address you, but remember, the separation which will be made between you and the church tonight is but a picture of an awful separation which shall be made between you and the church at the last great day.

You will sit upstairs, some of you, to look down upon the solemnity—remember, you may look upon it here, but you will not look upon it in heaven, unless your hearts are made new by Christ, and unless you are washed in His precious blood.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON**MARK 15:15-39 AND LUKE 23:27-49**

We will read two short passages from the Gospels this evening. May the blessed Spirit, who taught the Evangelists to record the sad story of our Lord's sufferings and death, give us fully to enter into the blessed meaning of it while we read it! First turn to Mark 15, verse 15.

Mark Chapter 15. Verses 15-16. *And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified. And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium;*

The guard-room of Herod's palace, where the Praetorian guards were wont to gather.

16-20. *And they call together the whole band. And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, and began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him. And when they had mocked him,*

To the utmost, and gone the full length of their cruel scorn,

20-23. *They took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross. And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.*

They did for Him what they did for others who were crucified, they gave Him myrrhed wine, as a stupefying draught, "but he received it not." He came to suffer and He would bear even to the end the full tale of His suffering.

24-27. *And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. And it was the third hour, and they crucified him. And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS. And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.*

They gave him the place of eminence, as if He were a greater offender than either of the two thieves.

28. *And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.*

Sinners to the right of Him, sinners to the left of Him, sinners all round Him, compassed about with those who sinned in the very highest degree by putting Him to death: "He was numbered with the transgressors." Oh, that sweet word! It is the hope of transgressors now that He was counted with them, and for His sake all the benefactions of heaven now descend upon transgressors who accept Him as their Substitute and Saviour.

29. *And they that passed by railed on him,*

Not only those who sat down to gloat their cruel eyes upon His miseries, but even the passers-by, "They that passed by, railed on him,"—

29-30. *Wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three day, Save thyself, and come down from the cross.*

He never said He would destroy the literal temple. He did, however, say concerning the temple of His body, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," and He did raise it up in three days after they had destroyed it.

31. *Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.*

What they said in bitter scorn was true—for mighty love had bound His hands for self-salvation. Infinite in love, found guilty of excess of love to men, "He saved others; himself he could not save."

32-33. *Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him. And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.*

A supernatural darkness, which could not have occurred according to the laws of nature. It did, as it were, “set a tabernacle for the sun”—the Sun of Righteousness was canopied a while in darkness, that no longer might those horrible eyes gaze upon His terrible anguish.

34. *And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

There was a denser darkness over His spirit than was over all the land and out of that darkness came this cry of agony.

35. *And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.*

Ah, me! This was either a cruel jest upon our Saviour’s prayer, or an utter misapprehension of it.

36. *And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.*

Jesus did receive this vinegar, and so fulfilled Psalm 69:21, “In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”

37-38. *And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.*

Even as the flesh of Christ, which is the veil of the Incarnate God, was rent, so now was the veil of mystery taken away. The temple in her sorrow rent her veil. The old ceremonial law passed away with this token of grief by the rending of the veil. It was a strong, I might say, a massive veil. It could not have been rent by any ordinary means, but when the hand of God takes hold upon the veil of Jewish types, it readily rends, and into the innermost mystery of the holy of holies we may gaze, yea, and through it we may enter.

39. *And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.*

Convinced by the cross. Oh, the triumphs of Christ! The last word He speaks won this testimony from the centurion in charge of the crucifixion.

Now we will read part of Luke’s narrative.

Luke Chapter 23. Verses 27-31. *And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?*

Our Saviour, even amidst the greatest sufferings, seemed almost to forget them in the deep sympathy that He had for the people around Him. He pictured in His mind’s eye that awful siege of Jerusalem. Who can read it, as Josephus describes it, without feeling the deepest horror? Oh, the misery of the women and of the children in that dreadful day when the zealots turned against each other within the city, and fought to the death, and when the Roman soldiery, pitiless as wolves, at last stormed the place!

Truly did the Saviour say of it that there should be no day like to it—neither was there. It was the concentration of human misery, and our Lord wept, because He foresaw what it would be and He bade these poor women reserve their tears for those awful sorrows.

32-33 *And there were also two other malefactors, led with him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.*

O blessed Master they did not spare You any scorn! There was no mode of expressing their contempt, which their malignity did not invent. Truly, “he was cumbered with the transgressors.” You could not count the three sufferers on Calvary without counting Him, He was so completely numbered with the others that He must be reckoned as one of them.

34. *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*

It was all that He could say in their favor and He did say that. If there is anything to be said in your favor, O my fellow-sinner, Christ will say it. And if there is nothing good in you that His eyes can light upon, He will pray on His own account, “Father, forgive them for my sake.”

34. *And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.*

His garments were the executioners’ perquisites—pitilessly they took them from Him and left Him naked in His shameful sorrow.

35. *And the people stood beholding.*

There was no pity in their eyes. No one of them turned away his face because he could not look upon so disgraceful a deed.

35. *And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.*

I have already reminded you that there was a deep truth hidden away in what these cruel mockers said, for Jesus must give Himself up as a ransom if we were to be redeemed.

36-38. *And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew,*

For these were the three languages known to the throng, and Pilate invited them all to read in “Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew,”—

38-39. *THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.*

Poor man—even though he is dying a felon’s death, he must be in the swim with the multitude, he must keep in with the fashion, so strong, so powerful, is the popular current with all mankind.

40-42. *But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.*

It was strange that Christ should find a friend dying on the cross by His side. Nobody else spoke to Him about a kingdom. I am afraid that even His former followers began to think that it was all a delusion, but this dying thief cheers the heart of Jesus by the mention of a kingdom, and by making a request to Him concerning that kingdom, even when the King was in His death agony.

43. *And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.*

The Master, you see, uses His old phraseology. In His preaching, He had been accustomed to say, “Verily, verily,” and here He is, even on the cross, the same Preacher still, for there was such assurance, such confidence, such verity, in all His words, that He never had to alter His style of speaking. “Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Well does our poet put it,—

*He that distributes crowns and thrones,
Hangs on a tree, and bleeds and groans.*

He was distributing these crowns and thrones even while hanging on the tree. “Tell it out among the nations that the Lord reigneth from the tree,” may not be an exact translation of the Psalm, but it is true, Psalm or no Psalm.

44. *And it was about the sixth hour,*

About noon, when the sun was at its height.

44. And there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

Three o'clock in the afternoon.

45. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

As if the great light of heaven and the pattern of heavenly things were both disturbed. The sun puts on mourning and the temple rends her veil in horror at the awful deed enacted on the cross.

46. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father,

Is it not sweet to see how Jesus begins and ends His prayers on the cross with "Father"?

46-48. Into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things, which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.

A strange ending to that day, was it not? The three hours' darkness and the death-cry of the Christ had not converted them, but it had convicted them of sin. They felt that a great and heinous crime had been committed, and though they had come together as to a mere show or sight, they went away from the spectacle impressed as they had never been before, "All the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned."

49. And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.

In these doings on Calvary, you and I have a share—in their guilt or else in their merit. Oh, that we may not be condemned with those who were guilty of His death, but may we be cleansed by that precious blood which puts away the sin of all who believe on Him!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—22 (Part II), 280, 279

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.